

Economic, Science, Technological and Cultural Cooperation, a series of agreements between the two countries have been signed and number of mechanisms have been set up to promote trade and economic cooperation. Steps have also been taken to enlarge Indo-Russian trade on consignment export basis through the ware-houses and also ensuring greater presence of Indian banks in Russia. Both sides are also making efforts to promote bilateral trade through participation in trade fairs and exhibitions, exchange of trade information, etc.

Production of Large Cardamoms

2146. SHRI BHIM PRASAD DAHAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Spices Board and the Department of Biotechnology are going ahead with their tissue culture programme for large cardamom;

(b) if so, the details of financial outlay thereof, separately;

(c) whether these Boards proposes to go ahead to multiply field tests, high yielding material and identifying genetically superior quality of large cardamom; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The project titled 'Large Cardamom Tissue Culture - Product Plan' is being implemented at a total cost of Rs. 58.05 lakhs to be shared between Department of Bio-technology and Spices Board. The project envisages large scale evaluation of the performance of Large Cardamom Tissue Culture vis-a-vis., its seedling population in planters field in four districts of Sikkim and Distt: Darjeeling, West Bengal.

(c) and (d). The first 'Programme Monitoring and Management Committee' (PMMC) meeting on tissue culture large cardamom product plan has identified eight clones namely SBLC-5, SBLC-7, SBLC-9, SBLC-10, SBLC-33, SBLC-37, SBLC-42 and SBLC-43 for invitro multiplication. The selection of the clones are based on a field level survey. The survey is intended to identify elite clones. The survey covered North, South, West and East Sikkim and Darjeeling District of West Bengal. The bench mark set up for selection of the elite clones is yield of 1000 kgs. per hectare, against the average national productivity of 225 kgs. per hectare (1995-96). The survey was undertaken by Indian Cardamom Research Institute of the Spices Board, Gangtok.

Captive Coal Mining Blocks

2147. SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received a number of proposals for allotment of captive Coal mining

blocks from companies, engaged in power generating and manufacture of Steel and Iron;

(b) if so, the number of such proposals pending for clearance with CIL alongwith the reasons for delay in giving clearance to those proposals; and

(c) the steps taken to take decision on such proposals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) and (c). The Screening Committee, constituted in the Ministry of Coal have considered a number of proposals for identification of captive coal blocks for allotment to power generating companies and companies engaged in the manufacture of Iron Steel.

Based on the decision of Screening Committee 15 power generating companies and 5 Iron and steel companies have been offered captive coal blocks.

Apart from this, proposals have been received from 10 power generating companies, 2 Iron and steel companies and 5 cement companies, which are under examination in consultation with CIL and concerned Ministries of the Government.

Financial Position of STC

2148. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Trading Corporation of India (STC) had fudged its 1995-96 accounts to convert a loss of Rs. 51.36 crore into a profit of Rs. 32.67 crore, as reported in 'The Financial Express', New Delhi dated October 1, 1996;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Comptroller and Auditor-General has also made several scathing remarks on the accounting practice of STC; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b). State Trading Corpn. of India has intimated that it finalised its accounts for the financial year 1995-96 on the basis of its well established accounting policies. The accounts were audited by the statutory auditors appointed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the same were considered and approved by the Board of Directors of STC. These audited accounts of STC reflected a profit of Rs. 32.67 crores. However, C & AG subsequently in its comments observed that the provision should be made for the following amounts :

(i) Rs. 20.02 crores to be realised on account of canalised import of newsprint in the period prior and upto 1991-92.

- (ii) Rs. 60.33 crores to be realised on account of import of fatty acids.
- (iii) Rs. 3.00 crores as investment made in Tea Trading Corporation of India (TTCI), a wholly owned subsidiary of STC.

The Board of Directors of STC considered the comment and keeping in view the facts that the amounts at (i) and (ii) above are debts to be realised from the Government and sale of tea gardens is under process in TTCI, the Board decided not to make any provisions for these amounts. The shareholders of STC in the Annual General Meeting also approved the stand taken by STC Board.

(c) and (d). The C & AG has commented upon STC's accounting policy/practice relating to turnover, investments, inventory, maintenance and reporting of loans and advances. The accounting policies of the Corporation are based on established accounting principles and are being followed from year to year.

Abid Hussain Committee

2149. SHRI UTTAM SINGH PAWAR : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have since received the reports of Abid Hussain Committee for promotional package for the small and tiny sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and by when it is likely to be received?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) In view of (a) above, does not arise.

(c) The term of the Committee has been extended upto 31st December, 1996, for enabling it to submit its report.

Coir Development Project in Kerala

2150. SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are extending assistance to Kerala for integrated coir development project;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith date of providing such assistance;

(c) whether the assistance has not been provided for the last two years;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether the implementation of the project are standstill due to lack of funds;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the steps taken for earlier release of assistance?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b). The Integrated Coir Development Project (ICDP) of the Government of Kerala was approved by the Central Government during 1993-94. The total cost of the project is Rs. 44.24 crores of which Government of India's share of 20% comes to Rs. 8.84 crores only. First instalment of Central assistance of Rs. 24.00 lakhs was released in 1993-94.

(c) and (d). More Funds could not be released to the State Government of Kerala due to procedural delays and for want of requisite approvals.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.

(g) Necessary approval of competent authority has been obtained for release of fund for the ICDP, Kerala.

Busy Season Credit Policy for Exporters

2151. SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any 'Busy Season Credit Policy' to boost exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether cost on exports has gone up due to rise in 6.5 percent interest on packing credit to 13 percent and banks have been charging arbitrary rates for bills delayed beyond 90 days;

(d) whether the Government have received any complaints from small exporters for non-availability of adequate export credit at cheaper rates; and

(e) if so, the steps taken to remove the difficulties faced by exporters?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). The Monetary Policy for the second half of 1996-97 was announced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 19.10.1996. The measures relating to exports announced in the policy inter alia include (i) upward revision in export credit targets in banks, from existing 10% to 12% of net bank credit to be achieved by the banks by end March, 1997 (ii) rationalisation of interest rates for post-shipment rupee credit on usance bills effective from 21st October, 1996 in terms of which the interest rate applicable upto a total period of 90 days is 13% per annum and beyond the total period of 90 days and upto 6 months from the date of shipment 15% per annum. The revision in interest rates is applicable to existing outstanding advances also.

(c) RBI has reported that from October/November 1993, exporters can avail of export credit in foreign currency at interest rates linked to LIBOR or in rupees and enjoy the forward premium available. Thus, the